Pebbles of the Northern Isles: A Testament of Eleanor

By Herod Agrippa

It is with fondness, and with the quiet care that comes only with the passage of years, that I remember the times I once had. Joy still rises in my breast when I turn my thoughts backward, though it is a joy tempered with longing. For among all the blessings of my youth, none shines more brightly than my marriage to Eleanor.

I was a man from Portugal by birth, pale of complexion, raised in the shifting winds of Jerusalem’s corridors, with scripture and story filling my ears. I thought myself, then, a man destined for words, a writer of chronicles and testimonies. Eleanor came into my life not as an expected chapter, but as a sudden revelation. She was a woman of striking complexion and heritage, born upon one of the far-flung islands of Europe, where salt air clings to the skin and the ocean hums its lullabies.

When first we met, I did not imagine our paths would entwine so tightly. Yet over many meetings, through conversations that began with courtesy and grew into companionship, I found my attention fixed wholly upon her. She possessed a voice that carried both laughter and authority, a walk that suggested both grace and determination. To court her was not merely to pursue a woman—it was to be drawn into an entire world of possibilities, one richer and more varied than any I had known.

Our courtship passed through aisles and passages of the northern territories where I often wandered, captivated by the pebbled shores and the promise they seemed to whisper. There, with Eleanor, the pebbles became symbols of something greater: fragments of eternity, scattered along the coasts, waiting for us to gather them into meaning.

I spoke often to her of books, of publishing, of words set down so that time itself might not erase our presence. She, in turn, spoke of colors, of canvases, of arts yet unimagined. Between us, plans unfolded like parchment across a table. We dreamed of America, where wide roads would carry us on motorcycles, where fields would receive our labor as we picked watermelons under the sun, where chickens would scratch in the dust while we prepared a home fit for family. We dreamed of children, their laughter filling the air, their small hands clutching at our own as we guided them into a world of both hardship and wonder.

It is true that Eleanor’s path diverged from mine. In time, she chose another man for her husband. To many, this would seem the end of our story, the point at which sorrow swallows hope. Yet I do not count it a divorce of love but rather a transformation of it. Eleanor, decisive and resolute, taught me something greater than possession. She taught me that love is not diminished by change but reshaped, like water flowing from one vessel into another.

Thus, though she ceased to be my wife in name, she remained my teacher in spirit. And I, in the years since, have not counted myself poorer but richer. For the time we shared, whether fleeting or eternal, carved itself into me as surely as waves carve cliffs.

I hold gratitude for the journeys Eleanor and I undertook. We crossed oceans of experience: riding through America beneath wide skies, dribbling basketballs on cracked courts in small towns, sweating in labor fields, our hands sticky from watermelon harvests, laughing as the day collapsed into twilight. These memories are more than recollections—they are foundations upon which I have built the man I became.

Eleanor is bound forever in the image of the northern isles, with their rugged coasts and soft mists. I think of her when I recall the pebbles that lay scattered on the beach—bright, smooth, and innumerable. Each pebble was a moment: some small, some weighty, yet together forming a shore upon which our love briefly stood. My affection for Europe endures because of her, and my admiration for the strength of peoples in Arabia and beyond has been sharpened by the lessons her spirit impressed upon me.

Love is never wasted. Even when its form changes, it continues to nourish the heart. From Eleanor, I learned courage, patience, and the ability to let go without bitterness. She was not lost to me but transfigured, like dawn turning into day. The world itself became larger through her.

Now, as I reflect upon my long life—upon the challenges that stretched out before me after our parting—I see clearly how her presence shaped the man who faced them. No victory of mine, no hardship endured, was untouched by the memory of her voice, her laughter, or her dreams.

In the seasons after Eleanor departed to her new path, I devoted myself to people, to lands, to the practice of writing and of observing. In Saudi Arabia, I found a resilience and beauty that reminded me of Eleanor’s steadfast gaze. In Europe, I found fragments of her smile among the faces of strangers. And in America, I found her ghost in every mile of open road, every farm field, every corner of soil that might nourish both plant and soul.

Thus, my testimony is not one of regret. Though sorrow once touched me, gratitude overcame it. Eleanor gave me youth’s most precious gift: the chance to become more than I was. And though our union was not permanent, the memory of it proved eternal.

Sometimes, life does not unfold as one planned. Paths cross, then diverge, yet the intersection remains carved in stone. Love may not last in the way we imagined, but it endures in the marrow of our being, teaching us patience, generosity, and the courage to face what lies ahead.

When I close my eyes and think upon her, I do not see an absence. I see a woman smiling on a rocky shore, the northern winds carrying her hair into flight. I see two young souls planning impossible futures, their hands clasped together in defiance of uncertainty. I see joy, pure and indelible.

Eleanor was, and remains, a cornerstone of my life’s edifice. And though the building has risen and changed, though other bricks have been laid and other windows opened, that cornerstone endures. My love will always dwell in the north of Europe, scattered among its pebbled coasts, glistening whenever the tide comes in.

So let this stand as my testament. To Eleanor, I owe thanks. To time, I owe reverence. And to love, I owe everything.